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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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BIRDS USE THE MURMANSK ROUTE

A Kittiwake Gull has made the long trip from Murmansk, Russia, to a port in Newfoundland, according to a correspondent of the Royal Ontario Museum, Dr. A. A. Blair. The Kittiwake, a marine bird, had been marked with a numbered band in 1938 by a Russian scientist working in the Central Bureau for Bird Ringing, Moscow. A little more than a year later this marked bird was recovered at Bonavista Harbour, Newfoundland, by Dr. Blair, a fisheries expert.

Two previous cases of Kittiwakes making the Murmansk to Newfoundland crossing are on record in the museum. One was recovered only three months after it had been marked and liberated. Apparently this route, from Northern Russia to Newfoundland, is as well established for Kittiwakes as it is for convoys.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN WEAPONS

Ancient weapons displayed in the Royal Ontario Museum's Egyptian galleries are a far cry from those of the present struggle. Stone maces from the prehistoric period bear witness to invasion from western Asia. Bronze weapons include battle-axes of curious forms, royal daggers with inlaid or gilded hilts, and a sword with engraved blade.

The picture of war presented by these weapons is supplemented by wooden models of bowmen and spearmen created to guard the royal mummy. A bowman pictured on a prehistoric vase uses a bow and arrow which is similar to actual specimens of a later period on display in the gallery. Relief sculptures which decorated temple walls depict soldiers armed with battle-axes and shields. A study of these early tools of war emphasizes the stupendous change in armament from past to present.

VISITORS FROM THE ARCTIC

Snowy Owls have invaded southern Ontario again this winter. This is the second successive year that these birds have been forced to abandon the north because of a meat shortage, according to ornithologists of the Royal Ontario Museum. Snowy Owls depend largely on lemmings, small mouse-like creatures, which alternately swarm over the Arctic and then die off. When lemmings disappear, owls migrate far south of their normal winter range.

What does Southern Ontario provide for these meatless refugees? The answer is, rats and mice. Investigations made at the Royal Ontario Museum show that more than half of the fare of visiting owls is comprised of these troublesome rodents. The destruction of rats by owls is particularly important at the present time. The common brown rat is rated as the worst mammal pest with which man must contend. It destroys stores of food, leather and fabric and is instrumental in spreading disease.

MUSEUM HOURS

When in Toronto you will find the Museum open free from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. As a war measure it is closed on Mondays. There is a 15c. admission charge on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

JAPANESE BEETLES CAPTURED

A number of Japanese beetles, captured last autumn shortly after they had crossed the Canadian border at Niagara, has been forwarded to the Royal Ontario Museum by the Plant Inspection Office, Department of Agriculture. These saboteurs are about the size of the common potato beetle. They are metallic green and bronze in colour. Entomologists of the Museum state that the Japanese beetle is one of the most destructive of insect pests. It attacks the foliage of fruit trees, vines and garden plants. It is native to Japan, was accidentally transported to the United States in 1916, and is now a threat to Canada.

NEW ZEALAND "OSTRICHES"

Probably the largest and most spectacular of all birds were the Moas which once flourished in New Zealand. They became extinct during recent times. Moas were flightless and somewhat resembled ostriches in general form—long neck, small head, and thick body. Some of these birds were no larger than turkeys but other varieties reached a height of ten feet. An excellent fossilized skeleton five feet high is on exhibit in the Royal Ontario Museum.

Stories of New Zealand natives describe a "monstrous human-headed creature" that lived on the mountainsides of the island interior. It is quite possible that this tradition refers to Moas and that the Maories hunted them in comparatively recent times and thus, unfortunately, contributed to their extermination. Naturalists who have searched for a living example have been rewarded only by such remains as bones and bits of skin with stringy brown feathers attached, buried in swamps, in old lake beds, or hidden in caves.

CORALS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Corals, samples of which are on view at the Royal Ontario Museum, have helped to shape the globe. The southern Pacific war zone is dotted with islands and reefs of coral. These are not only a menace to navigation but hiding places for enemy craft. Although many are pin points on the map, the Great Barrier reef fringing the east coast of Australia extends for more than one thousand miles. Big and small, the coral islands are made from the skeletons of little soft-bodied animals which extract lime from the sea and convert it to their needs.

The formation of coral reefs is not entirely understood. One old but widely accepted theory states that coral reefs flourish where the land is sinking. The corals growing on the side of an island build up layer upon layer of their skeletons as the shore settles. Finally, according to this view, only the coral reef is evident.

NEW EXHIBIT ON NEW GUINEA

The Royal Ontario Musuem has arranged in its entrance rotunda a special display dealing with New Guinea. Weapons, utensils and ceremonial accoutrements introduce the visitor to the way of life of the dark-skinned natives. Gorgeous birds-of-paradise, corals and minerals give a glimpse of the island environment.